

Weekly Compilation of
**Presidential
Documents**



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Editor’s Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on July 18, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

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Week Ending Friday, July 18, 2008

The President's Radio Address

July 12, 2008

Good morning. This week, Members of Congress returned to Washington after their Fourth of July recess. While they were at home, they heard a clear message from their constituents: Americans are concerned about high gas prices. Everyone who commutes to work, grows food, books a plane ticket, or runs a small business feels the squeeze of rising energy prices. And Americans are increasingly frustrated with Congress's failure to take action.

One of the factors driving up high gas prices is that many of our oil deposits here in the United States have been put off-limits for exploration and production. Past efforts to meet the demand for oil by expanding domestic resources have been repeatedly rejected by Democrats in Congress.

This week, however, we are seeing signs that the recent rise in gasoline prices has caused some to rethink their long-held opposition to opening up more areas for domestic production. If this change of heart is real, we can work together on four steps that will expand American oil and gas production and eventually relieve the pressure of rising prices.

First, we should expand American oil production by increasing access to offshore exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf, or OCS. Experts believe that the OCS, that is currently off-limits, could produce enough oil to match America's current production for almost 10 years. The problem is that Congress has restricted access to key parts of the OCS since the early 1980s. Since that time, technological advances have allowed us to explore oil offshore in ways that protect the environment.

Last month, I called on the House and the Senate to lift this legislative ban, so we can allow States to have the option of opening up OCS resources off their coasts. I also of-

fered to lift an executive restriction on this exploration if Congress did so. Unfortunately, Congress has failed to act. Time is running out before Congress leaves for its summer recess. For the sake of our economy and American consumers, Congress must move quickly to expand exploration of the OCS, so we can tap into these vast oil resources as soon as possible.

Second, we should expand oil production by tapping into the extraordinary potential of oil shale. Oil shale is a type of rock that can produce oil when exposed to heat or other processes. One major deposit in the Rocky Mountain West alone could, if fully recovered, equal more than a century's worth of imports at current levels. Last year, however, Democratic leaders inserted a provision blocking oil shale leasing on Federal lands into an omnibus spending bill. That provision can be taken out as easily as it was slipped in, and Congress should do so immediately.

Third, we should expand American oil production by permitting exploration in northern Alaska. Scientists have developed innovative techniques to reach this oil with virtually no impact on the land or local wildlife. With a drilling footprint that covers just a tiny fraction of this vast terrain, America could produce an estimated 10 billion barrels of oil. That is roughly the equivalent of two decades of imported oil from Saudi Arabia. I urge Members of Congress to allow this remote region to bring enormous benefits to the American people.

Finally, we need to expand and enhance our refining capacity. It has been 30 years since a new refinery was built in our Nation, and lawsuits and redtape have made it extremely costly to expand or modify existing refineries. The result is that America now imports millions of barrels of fully refined gasoline from abroad. This imposes needless costs on American families and drivers, it deprives American workers of good jobs, and it is now time for Congress to change it.

It's time for Members of Congress to address the pain that high gas prices are causing our citizens. Every extra dollar that American families spend because of high gas prices is one less dollar they can use to put food on the table or send a child to college. The American people deserve better, so I urge Congress to come together with my administration now to ensure that our economy remains the strongest, most vibrant, and most hopeful in the world.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:10 a.m. on July 11 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on the Death of Former White House Press Secretary Tony Snow

July 12, 2008

Laura and I are deeply saddened by the death of our dear friend Tony Snow. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Jill, and their children, Kendall, Robbie, and Kristi. The Snow family has lost a beloved husband and father, and America has lost a devoted public servant and a man of character.

Tony was one of our Nation's finest writers and commentators. He earned a loyal following with incisive radio and television broadcasts. He was a gifted speechwriter who served in my father's administration. And I was thrilled when he agreed to return to the White House to serve as my Press Secretary. It was a joy to watch Tony at the podium each day. He brought wit, grace, and a great love of country to his work. His colleagues will cherish memories of his energetic personality and relentless good humor.

All of us here at the White House will miss Tony, as will the millions of Americans he inspired with his brave struggle against cancer. One of the things that sustained Tony Snow was his faith. And Laura and I join people across our country in praying that this

good man has now found comfort in the arms of his Creator.

Remarks on the Death of Former White House Press Secretary Tony Snow

July 13, 2008

Well, we had some bad news this weekend. Our good friend Tony Snow passed away. Tony, you know, worked with us and made a lot of friends here in the White House. And Laura and I are—we're really saddened by his death.

I came to know Tony as a very smart and capable man. He had good values. He was an honest guy. You know, he had a wonderful sense of humor. He loved to laugh; he loved his country; and he loved his family.

And our thoughts are with Jill and the three children now as they deal with their grief. We went to church this morning at Camp David, and I prayed for Jill and the family, that they would have—find comfort and strength during this tough time for them. And I just hope they understand that Tony was loved here in the White House, and a lot of those who, you know, got to know him really do care about Jill and the kids.

So, anyway, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks on the 10th Anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act

July 14, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome. I want to welcome Congressman Wolf, Congressman Smith, Congressman Franks, former Senator Nickles. Thank you all for coming. I'm so honored that you've come to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act.

This legislation that we commemorate today builds on a tradition that defined our Nation. After all, when the Founding Fathers adopted the Bill of Rights, the very first liberty they enshrined was the freedom of religion. They recognized that the most basic

freedom a man can have is the right to worship his own God as he sees fit. Today, we are blessed to live in a country where that freedom is respected.

In too many countries, expressions of freedom were silenced by tyranny, intolerance, and oppression. So a decade ago, Members of Congress—I suspect some of the Members here—and religious leaders and human rights activists came together to advance religious freedom around the globe. The result of their work was the International Religious Freedom Act. The bill created vital diplomatic tools to help our Government to promote religious liberty abroad. The act established an Ambassador at Large position to ensure that religious liberty remains a priority of every administration. And I want to thank our current Ambassador, John Hanford, for joining us today. And thank you for taking on this important job.

The act established the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to monitor the state of religious liberty worldwide. The act requires annual reporting on the state of religious freedom in every nation, to help identify the most egregious offenders. The act authorizes sanctions against regimes.

In all these ways, the act has placed religious liberty where it belongs, at the center of U.S. foreign policy.

We've seen some hopeful progress during the last couple of years. We've seen it in Turkmenistan, where the nation's chief mufti had been ousted and imprisoned for refusing to teach state propaganda as a sacred religious text. Through efforts authorized by the International Religious Freedom Act, the United States pressed for the mufti's release. In 2007, Mufti Ibadullah was pardoned and freed. He has since become an adviser to Turkmenistan's Council on Religious Affairs.

We've seen some progress in Vietnam. The United States used the tools of this act to press for the release of dozens of religious prisoners, all of whom had been freed. Vietnam's Government has reopened many of the churches it had shut down. And most religious groups report a decrease in the Government's oppression of believers. This act has encouraged Vietnam to take some promising first steps toward religious liberty, and we're going to continue to work toward the

day when all Vietnamese are free to worship as they so desire.

The 10-year anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act is also an occasion to remember the many people who have yet to secure this precious liberty. Our thoughts turn especially to those living in the countries where religious freedom is of particular concern. Some of these nations have taken steps toward reform; others haven't. Today we urge the leaders of all these countries to immediately end their abuses of religious freedom. We urge these leaders to respect the rights of those who seek only to worship their God as they see fit.

Today we remember those seeking religious freedom in Iran, where the regime's anti-Semitism has provoked global outrage. We remember those seeking religious freedom in Eritrea, where approximately 3,000 religious prisoners languish in the nation's jails. We remember those seeking religious freedom in Sudan, where police have used tear gas to attack a Christian church, and where Christian leaders who met with a Muslim woman wanting to convert were beaten and detained.

We remember those seeking religious freedom in North Korea, where those caught practicing faiths other than the state ideology are imprisoned and people found with Bibles can be executed. We remember those seeking religious freedom in Burma, especially the nation's Buddhist monks who have endured brutal raids on their monasteries and suffered tear gas attacks and gunfire during peaceful protests.

We remember those seeking religious freedom in Uzbekistan, where, in the past, members of religious minorities have been beaten and jailed, yet where recent agreements give us hope that these abuses will not be repeated in the future.

We remember those seeking religious freedom in Saudi Arabia, where the religious police continue to harass non-Muslims, yet where we also believe reforms pledged by King Abdallah can bring real change. We remember those seeking religious freedom in China, where we honor those who press for their liberties, people like Uighur Muslims. I had the honor of meeting Rebiya Kadeer. I've also had the honor of meeting those who

attend underground churches in China. And we also honor the courage of the Dalai Lama and the Buddhists in Tibet.

And you know, last month here at the White House, I met with a Chinese dissident named Li Baiguang. He's a lawyer who worked on human rights cases; he's a house church Protestant. For his work, he's been repeatedly jailed and attacked. A few months ago, he was scheduled to meet with Members of Congress. State authorities blocked the meeting and detained Li on the outskirts of Beijing. This determined man has pledged: "I'll continue to seek justice for victims of rights abuses and promote the rule of law in China." And my message to President Hu Jintao, when I last met him, was this: So long as there are those who want to fight for their liberty, the United States stands with them.

Whenever and wherever I meet leaders, I'm going to constantly remind them that they ought to welcome religion in their society, not fear it. I'll remind them, someone pledged to love a neighbor like they'd like to be loved themselves is someone who will add to their society in constructive and peaceful ways.

I'm met by men and women who are working for religious freedom around the globe, people like Li. And when I do, I'm always impressed by their courage. I've attended worship services from Hanoi to Beijing. And when I speak to world leaders, I remind them—the leaders in those countries that the worship services are a necessary part of developing a society for which they can be proud.

And so as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act, we pray that all those who seek their God will be able to do so free of oppression and fear.

I want to thank you all for your good work, and I ask for the good Lord to continue to bless our country. Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Donald L. Nickles; Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah, adviser, Turkmenistan's Council on Religious Affairs; Chinese Uighur dissident Rebiya Kadeer; and Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet. The Office of

the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on Energy

July 14, 2008

Good afternoon. Across the country, Americans are concerned about the high price of gasoline. Every one of our citizens who drives to work or takes a family vacation or runs a small business is feeling the squeeze of rising prices at the pump.

To reduce pressure on prices, we must continue to implement good conservation policies, and we need to increase the supply of oil, especially here at home. For years, my administration has been calling on Congress to expand domestic oil production. Unfortunately, Democrats on Capitol Hill have rejected virtually every proposal, and now Americans are paying at the pump. When Members of Congress were home over the Fourth of July recess, they heard a clear message from their constituents: We need to take action now to expand domestic oil production.

One of the most important steps we can take to expand American oil production is to increase access to offshore exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf, or what's called the OCS. But Congress has restricted access to key parts of the OCS since the early 1980s. Experts believe that these restricted areas of the OCS could eventually produce nearly 10 years worth of America's current annual oil production. And advances in technology have made it possible to conduct oil exploration in the OCS that is out of sight, protects coral reefs and habitats, and protects against oil spills.

Last month, I asked Congress to lift this legislative ban and allow the exploration and development of offshore oil resources. I committed to lift an executive prohibition on this exploration if Congress did so, tailoring my executive action to match what Congress passed. It's been almost a month since I urged Congress to act, and they've done nothing; they've not moved any legislation. And as the Democratically controlled Congress has sat idle, gas prices have continued to increase.

The failure to act is unacceptable. It's unacceptable to me, and it's unacceptable to the American people. So today I've issued a memorandum to lift the executive prohibition on oil exploration in the OCS. With this action, the executive branch's restrictions on this exploration have been cleared away. This means that the only thing standing between the American people and these vast oil resources is action from the U.S. Congress.

Now the ball is squarely in Congress's court. Democratic leaders can show that they have finally heard the frustrations of the American people by matching the action I've taken today, repealing the congressional ban, and passing legislation to facilitate responsible offshore exploration. This legislation must allow States to have a say in what happens off their shores, provides a way for the Federal Government and States to share new leasing revenues, and ensure the environment is protected.

This legislation should also take other essential steps to expand domestic production. Congress should clear the way for our Nation to tap into the extraordinary potential of oil shale, which could provide Americans with domestic oil supplies that are equal to more than a century's worth of current oil product—of oil imports. Congress should permit exploration in currently restricted areas of northern Alaska, which could produce roughly the equivalent of two decades of imported oil from Saudi Arabia. Congress should expand and enhance our domestic refining capacity, so that America will no longer have to import millions of barrels of fully refined gasoline from abroad.

The time for action is now. This is a difficult period for millions of American families. Every extra dollar they have to spend because of high gas prices is one dollar less they can use to put food on the table or send a child to school. And they are rightly angered by Congress's failure to enact common-sense solutions. Today I've taken every step within my power to allow offshore exploration of the OCS. All that remains is for the Democratic leaders in Congress to allow a vote. The American people are watching the numbers climb higher and higher at the pump, and they're waiting to see what the Congress will do.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Proclamation 8273—FBI Day, 2008

July 14, 2008

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

For 100 years, the committed men and women of the Federal Bureau of Investigation have worked diligently to deliver justice and keep Americans safe. On FBI Day, we recognize the Bureau's many accomplishments and pay tribute to all who have served in its ranks with valor and dedication.

The FBI traces its origins to 1908, when under the leadership of President Theodore Roosevelt and Attorney General Charles Bonaparte, a force of Special Agents was created, later to be called the Bureau of Investigation. As a Federal agency with the power to investigate crimes across State lines and enforce Federal law, the FBI has protected our country against threats from abroad and caught dangerous criminals like "Baby Face" Nelson, John Dillinger, Ted Kaczynski, and Ramzi Yousef. Today, the FBI is charged with guarding our Nation from terrorist attacks, combating public corruption and organized crime, resisting cyber attacks, and opposing other high-technology crimes. The FBI also has a deep commitment to civil rights, helping protect the values we cherish.

With an abiding respect for the Constitution, the men and women of the FBI bring strength, impartiality, and devotion to their pursuit of justice. They continue to uphold their motto of "Fidelity, Bravery, Integrity." On FBI Day, we especially remember the fallen agents who paid the ultimate price in serving our country and keeping our Nation safe.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 26, 2008, as

FBI Day. I call upon all Americans to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 12:03 p.m., July 16, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on July 17.

Memorandum on Modification of the Withdrawal of Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf From Leasing Disposition

July 14, 2008

Memorandum for the Secretary of the Interior

Subject: Modification of the Withdrawal of Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf from Leasing Disposition

Under the authority vested in me as President of the United States, including section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a), I hereby modify the prior memoranda of withdrawals from disposition by leasing of the United States Outer Continental Shelf issued on August 4, 1992, and June 12, 1998, as modified on January 9, 2007, to read only as follows:

Under the authority vested in me as President of the United States, including section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a), I hereby withdraw from disposition by leasing, for a time period without specific expiration, those areas of the Outer Continental Shelf designated as of July 14, 2008, as Marine Sanctuaries under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. 1431–1434, 33 U.S.C. 1401 *et seq.*

Nothing in this withdrawal affects the rights under existing leases in these areas.

George W. Bush

The President's News Conference

July 15, 2008

The President. Good morning. It's been a difficult time for many American families who are coping with declining housing values and high gasoline prices. This week, my administration took steps to help address both these challenges.

To help address challenges in the housing and financial markets, we announced temporary steps to help stabilize them and increase confidence in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. These two enterprises play a central role in our housing finance system, so Treasury Paulson has worked with the Federal Reserve Chairman, Bernanke, so that the companies and the Government regulators—put the companies and the Government regulators on a plan to strengthen these enterprises. We must ensure they can continue providing access to mortgage credit during this time of financial stress.

I appreciate the positive reaction this plan has received from many Members of Congress. I urge Members to move quickly to enact the plan in its entirety, along with the good oversight legislation that we have recommended for both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. This is a part of a—should be part of the housing package that is moving its way through the Congress. And I hope they move quickly. The newly proposed authorities will be temporary and used only if needed. And as we work to maintain the health of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, we'll work to ensure that they remain shareholder-owned companies.

To help address the pressure on gasoline prices, my administration took action this week to clear the way for offshore exploration on the Outer Continental Shelf. It's what's called OCS. Congress has restricted access to key parts of the OCS since the early 1980s. I've called on Congress to remove the ban. There was also an executive prohibition on

exploration—offshore exploration. So yesterday, I issued a memorandum to lift this executive prohibition. With this action, the executive branch's restrictions have been removed, and this means that the only thing standing between the American people and these vast oil resources is action from the U.S. Congress. Bringing OCS resources on line is going to take time, which means that the need for congressional action is urgent. The sooner Congress lifts the ban, the sooner we can get these resources from the ocean floor to the refineries to the gas pump.

Democratic leaders have been delaying action on offshore exploration, and now they have an opportunity to show that they finally heard the frustrations of the American people. They should match the action I have taken, repeal the congressional ban, and pass legislation to facilitate responsible offshore exploration.

Congress needs, also, to pass bills to fund our Government in a fiscally responsible way. I was disappointed to learn the Democratic leaders in the House postponed committee consideration of the defense appropriations bill, and they did so yesterday. They failed to get a single one of the 12 annual appropriations bills to my desk. In fact, this is the latest that both the House and the Senate have failed to pass any of their annual spending bills in more than two decades.

There are just 26 legislative days left before the end of the fiscal year. This means that to get their fundamental job done, Congress would have to pass a spending bill nearly every other day. This is not a record to be proud of, and I think the American people deserve better.

Our citizens are rightly concerned about the difficulties in the housing markets and high gasoline prices and the failure of the Democratic Congress to address these and other pressing issues. Yet despite the challenges we face, our economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience. While the unemployment rate has risen, it remains at 5.5 percent, which is still low by historical standards. And the economy continued to grow in the first quarter of this year. The growth is slower than we would have liked, but it was growth nonetheless.

We saw the signs of a slowdown early and enacted a bipartisan economic stimulus package. We've now delivered more than \$91 billion in tax relief to more than 112 million American households this year. It's going to take some time before we feel the full benefit of the stimulus package, but the early signs are encouraging. Retail sales were up in May and June and should contribute—and will contribute—to economic growth. In the months ahead, we expect more Americans to take advantage of these stimulus payments and inject new energy into our economy.

The bottom line is this: We're going through a tough time, but our economy has continued growing, consumers are spending, businesses are investing, exports continue increasing, and American productivity remains strong. We can have confidence in the long-term foundation of our economy, and I believe we will come through this challenge stronger than ever before.

And now I'll be glad to take some questions from you.

Mr. Hunt [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Corporations/U.S. Financial Institutions

Q. Mr. President, are America's banks in trouble? And does the rescue of Freddie Mae and Fannie Mac make more bailouts inevitable by sending the message that there are some institutions that are too big to fail and that it's okay to take risks?

The President. First, let me talk about Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. A lot of people in the country probably don't understand how important they are to the mortgage markets. And it's really important for people to have confidence in the mortgage markets and that there be stability in the mortgage markets. And that's why Secretary Paulson announced the plan this weekend, which says that he needs authorities from the Congress to come up with a line of credit for these institutions, if needed, and that he ought to have the authority to invest capital, if needed.

And so the purpose was to send a clear signal that, one, we understand how important these institutions are to the mortgage markets, and two, to kind of calm nerves. The truth of the matter is, by laying this out, it

is—makes it less likely we'll need to use this kind of authority to begin with, which, by the way, is temporary authority.

As you—talked about banks. Now, if you're a commercial bank in America and your deposit—and you have a deposit in a commercial bank in America, your deposit is insured by the Federal Government up to \$100,000. And so therefore, when you hear nervousness about your bank, you know, people start talking about how nervous they are about your bank's condition, the depositor must understand that the Federal Government, through the FDIC, stands behind the deposit up to \$100,000. And therefore—which leads me to say that if you're a depositor, you're in—you're protected by the Federal Government.

I happened to have witnessed a bank run in Midland, Texas, one time. I'll never forget the guy standing in the bank lobby saying, "Your deposits are good. We got you insured. You don't have to worry about it if you got less than \$100,000 in the bank." The problem was, people didn't hear. And there's a—became a nervousness. My hope is, is that people take a deep breath and realize that their deposits are protected by our Government.

So these are two different instances—mortgage markets on the one hand, banking on the other.

Q. And banking—do you think the system is in trouble?

The President. I think the system basically is sound; I truly do. And I understand there's a lot of nervousness. And—but the economy's growing; productivity is high; trade's up; people are working. It's not as good as we'd like, but—and to the extent that we find weakness, we'll move. That's one thing about this administration, we're not afraid of making tough decisions. And I thought the decision that Secretary Paulson recommended on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac was the right decision.

Matt [Matt Spetalnick, Reuters].

National Economy/Legislative Agenda

Q. Mr. President, you mentioned the latest retail sales, but they actually show a smaller boost than economists had expected from the Government rebate checks. Given the latest economic data, are you still insisting that the

United States is not headed for a recession? And are you willing to consider a second stimulus package if needed?

The President. Matt, I—all I can tell you is we grew in the first quarter. I can remember holding a press conference here and that same question came about, assuming that we weren't going to grow. But we showed growth. It's not the growth we'd like; we'd like stronger growth. And there are some things we can do. One is wait for the stimulus package to fully kick in and not raise taxes. If the Democratic leaders had their way in Congress, they would raise taxes, which would be the absolute wrong thing to do.

Secondly, they can pass housing legislation that reforms FHA as well as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. And by the way, a part of that—as I mentioned in my opening statement, a part of that reform will be a strong regulator to help these institutions stay focused on the core mission, which is mortgages.

They can pass energy legislation. I readily concede that, you know, it's not going to produce a barrel of oil tomorrow, but it is going to change the psychology that demand will constantly outstrip supply. As I said in my remarks, it's going to take a while to get these reserves on line. But it won't take a while to send a signal to the world that we're willing to use new technologies to find oil reserves here at home.

And the other thing Congress can do is work on trade legislation. One of the positives in the economy right now is the fact that we're selling more goods overseas. And they need to open up markets to Colombia and South Korea and Panama.

John [John Yang, NBC News].

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, just to follow up with Terry's question a little bit. You talked about the mortgage markets and banks. Are there other entities in the economy that are so crucial to the stability and confidence in the economy—I'm thinking particularly of General Motors, which today is cutting jobs, announcing they're going into the credit market to raise billions of dollars—are there other entities that are so crucial to stability that

require Government action to show support for them?

The President. Government action—if you’re talking about bailing out—if your question is, should the Government bail out private enterprise? The answer is, no, it shouldn’t. And by the way, the decisions on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—I hear some say “bailout”—I don’t think it’s a bailout. The shareholders still own the company. That’s why I said we want this to continue to be a shareholder-owned company.

In this case, there is a feeling that the Government will stand behind mortgages through these two entities. And therefore, we felt a special need to step up and say that we are going to provide, if needed, temporary assistance through either debt or capital.

In terms of private enterprises, no, I don’t think the Government ought to be involved with bailing out companies. I think the Government ought to create the conditions so that companies can survive. And I’ve listed four. And one of the things I’m deeply troubled about is people who feel like it’s okay to raise taxes during these times. And it would be a huge mistake to raise taxes right now.

Plante [Bill Plante, CBS News].

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Corporations

Q. Mr. President, you just said twice that the—Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac should remain shareholder-owned companies. If that’s the case, because of the implicit Government guarantee that they have, or that is understood—has been understood by the markets—their exposure is higher and their reserves are lower than any normal business’s—should they be privatized altogether and be subject to normal business rules?

The President. Well, the first step is to make sure that there’s confidence and stability in the mortgage markets through the actions that we have taken. Secondly, we strongly believe there ought to be a regulator. That’s something—this is the position I have been advocating for a long time. And the reason why is, it’s going to be very important for these institutions to focus on their core

mission, which is to provide refinancing for the mortgage industry. And hopefully, these measures will instill the confidence in the people. And we’ll see how things go.

Q. But they should still have that public guarantee then?

The President. You know, there is an implicit guarantee, as you said. They ought to be focusing on the missions they’re expected to do. We have advocated reform for a long period of time. But these need to remain private enterprises, and that’s what our message is.

Price of Gasoline/Oil Supply

Q. Mr. President, in February, you were asked about Americans facing the prospect of \$4 a gallon gasoline, and you said you hadn’t heard of that at the time. Gas prices—

The President. Heard of it now.

Q. Gas prices are now approaching \$5 a gallon in some parts of the country. Offshore oil exploration is obviously a long-term approach. What is the short-term advice for Americans? What can you do now to help them?

The President. First of all, there is a psychology in the oil market that basically says, supplies are going to stay stagnant while demand rises. And that’s reflected, somewhat, in the price of crude oil. Gasoline prices are reflected—the amount of a gasoline price at the pump is reflected in the price of crude oil. And therefore, it seems like it makes sense to me to say to the world that we’re going to use new technologies to explore for oil and gas in the United States—offshore oil, ANWR, oil shale projects—to help change this psychology, to send a clear message that the supplies of oil will increase.

Secondly, obviously good conservation measures matter. I’ve been reading a lot about how the automobile companies are beginning to adjust—people—consumers are beginning to say, “Wait a minute, I don’t want a gas guzzler anymore; I want a smaller car.” So the two need to go hand in hand. There is no immediate fix. This took us a while to get in this problem; there is no short-term solution. I think it was in the Rose Garden where I issued this brilliant statement: If I had a magic wand. But the President

doesn't have a magic wand. You just can't say, low gas. It took us a while to get here, and we need to have a good strategy to get out of it.

Strategic Petroleum Reserve

Q. But you do have the strategic oil petroleum reserve. What about opening that?

The President. The strategic oil petroleum reserve is for, you know, emergencies. But that doesn't address the fundamental issue. And we need to address the fundamental issue—which I, frankly, have been talking about since I first became President—which was a combination of using technology to have alternative sources of energy, but at the same time, finding oil and gas here at home. And now is the time to get it done. I heard somebody say, “Well, it's going to take 7 years.” Well, if we'd have done it 7 years ago, we'd have—be having a different conversation today. I'm not suggesting we'd have completely created—you know, changed the dynamics in the world, but it certainly would have been—we'd have been using more of our own oil and sending less money overseas.

Yes, Ed [Ed Henry, Cable News Network].

Former White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan/War on Terror in Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning.

The President. Thank you. It is a good morning.

Q. It is.

The President. Every day is a good morning when you get to serve the country.

Q. Absolutely. And we know you prize loyalty, so I wonder whether you felt betrayed by Scott McClellan's assessment of the war in Iraq? And moving forward, since there have been positive signs on the ground in Iraq, Senator Obama is about to take a trip there. What would be your advice to him as he tries to assess the situation on the ground?

The President. I have had no comment on—no comment now on Scott's book.

Secondly, I would ask him to listen carefully to Ryan Crocker and General Petraeus. It's—there's a temptation to kind of get—let the politics at home get in the way with

the considered judgment of the commanders. That's why I strongly rejected an artificial timetable of withdrawal. It's kind of like an arbitrary thing, you know—“We will decide in the Halls of Congress how to conduct our affairs in Iraq based upon polls and politics, and we're going to impose this on people”—as opposed to listening to our commanders and our diplomats, and listening to the Iraqis, for that matter. The Iraqis have invited us to be there. But they share a goal with us, which is to get our combat troops out, as conditions permit. Matter of fact, that's what we're doing. Return on success has been the strategy of this administration, and our troops are coming home, but based upon success.

And so I would ask whoever goes there—whatever elected official goes there, to listen carefully to what is taking place and understand that the best way to go forward is to listen to the parties who are actually on the ground. And that's hard to do. I understand for some in Washington there's a lot of pressure. You got these groups out there—MoveOn.org, you know—banging away on these candidates, and it's hard to kind of divorce yourself from the politics.

And so I'm glad all the—a lot of these elected officials are going over there, because they'll get an interesting insight, something that you don't get from just reading your wonderful newspapers or listening to your TV shows.

John [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

Q. Mr. President—

The President. Don't you call them TV shows? Newscasts, yes.

Price of Gasoline/Oil Supply/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. —following up on the question about oil, in the past, when oil prices have gone up a lot, they've wound up going down a lot afterward. But I wonder if you're able to say that oil prices in the future are going to come down a lot.

The President. I can't predict it, John. I mean, look, my attitude is, is that unless there is a focused effort—in the short term—unless there's a focused effort to bring more supplies to market, there's going to be a lot

of upward pressure on price. We got 85 million barrels a day and—of demand and 86 million barrels of production. And it's just—it's too narrow a spread, it seems like to me.

Now, I'm encouraged by, you know, the Caspian Basin exploration. I'm encouraged that the Saudis are reinvesting a lot into their older fields. And remember, some of these oil fields get on the decline rate, which requires a lot of investment to keep their production up to previous levels. So one thing we look at is how much money is being reinvested in some of those fields. I'm encouraged by that.

I am discouraged by the fact that some nations subsidize the purchases of product, like gasoline, which, therefore, means that demand may not be causing the market to adjust as rapidly as we'd like. I was heartened by the fact that the Chinese the other day announced that they're going to start reducing some of their subsidies—which all of a sudden you may have some, you know, demand-driven changes in the overall balance.

But, look, if we conserve and find more energy, we will done—have done our part to address, you know, the global market right now. And the other thing is that this is just a transition period. I mean, all of us want to get away from reliance upon hydrocarbons, but it's not going to happen overnight. One of these days, people are going to be using battery technologies in their cars. You've heard me say this a lot. I'm confident it's going to happen. And the throw-away line, of course, is that your car won't have to look like a golf cart.

But the question then becomes, where are we going to get electricity? And that's why I'm a big believer in nuclear power, to be able to make us less dependent on oil and better stewards of the environment. But there is a transition period during the hydrocarbon era, and it hasn't ended yet, as our people now know. Gasoline prices are high.

I don't—again, I don't want to be a “told you so,” but if you go back and look at the strategy we put out early on in this administration, we understood what was coming. We knew the markets were going to be tight. And therefore, we called for additional exploration at home, plus what has been happening, which is an acceleration of new tech-

nologies—including ethanol technologies—to get us less dependent on crude oil from overseas.

Let's see here, Steven Lee. Steven Lee [Steven Lee Myers, New York Times].

Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Q. Mr. President, thank you. I wonder in light of the Supreme Court's decision if you could tell us what you plan to do with Guantanamo?

The President. Steven Lee, we're still analyzing—“we” being the Justice Department—are still analyzing the effects of the decision, which, as you know, I disagreed with. And secondly, we're working with Members of Congress on a way forward. This is a very complicated case; it complicated the situation in Guantanamo.

My view all along has been, either send them back home or give them a chance to have a day in court. I still believe that makes sense. We're just trying to figure out how to do so in light of the Supreme Court ruling.

Eggen [Dan Eggen, Washington Post].

Zimbabwe

Q. Mr. President, last week, China joined Russia in blocking the sanctions—Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. I can't imagine this pleased you very much. Do you have any reaction to—particularly the Chinese move? And also, where do you go from here to try to make sure that the regime doesn't—

The President. You read my reaction right; I was displeased. We spent a lot of time on this subject at the G-8, and there was great concern by most of the nations there—well, the G-8 nations that were there—about what was taking place in Zimbabwe. And it's, frankly, unacceptable, and it should be unacceptable to a lot of folks.

And so we discussed the need for, you know, U.N. Security Council resolutions. And I was disappointed that the Russians vetoed. I didn't—I hadn't spent any time with the Chinese leader talking about—specifically talking about any Security Council resolutions; I'd had with President Medvedev.

And so I think the thing we need to do now is for us to analyze whether or not we can have some more bilateral sanctions on regime leaders. After all, these sanctions

were not against the Zimbabwe people; these were against the people that—in the Mugabe regime that made the decisions it made. We got the Treasury Department and State Department—are now working on a potential U.S. action.

Bret [Bret Baier, FOX News].

War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I have a two-part question on the war, in light of increasing violence in Afghanistan. Do you believe current U.S. troop levels in Iraq are hindering efforts to put more U.S. troops into Afghanistan?

And secondly, this morning in his prepared remarks, Senator Obama will say this: “By any measure, our single-minded, open-ended focus on Iraq is not a sound strategy for keeping America safe. In fact, as should have been apparent to President Bush and Senator McCain, the central front in the war on terror is not Iraq, and it never was.”

The President. Well, as you know, I’m loath to respond to a particular Presidential candidate, and so I will try not to. My view is, is that the war on terror is being fought out on two simultaneous fronts that are noted—noticeable to the American people and on other fronts that aren’t. And so the first question that anybody running for President gets: Is this a war? Or is this like law enforcement? Is it a—does this require full use of U.S. assets in order to protect the American people? As you know, I made the decision that it does require those assets.

Secondly, that these are two very important fronts, both of which are important to the future of the country. And therefore, we got to succeed in both. Thirdly, one front right now is going better than the other, and that’s Iraq, where we’re succeeding, and our troops are coming home based upon success. And Afghanistan is a tough fight. It’s a tough fight because, one, this is a state that had been just ravaged by previous wars, and there wasn’t a lot of central Government outreach to the people.

Secondly, there is a tough enemy, and they’re brutal. And they kill at the drop of a hat in order to affect behavior. It’s a little bit reminiscent of what was taking place in Iraq a couple of years ago, where the enemy

knows that they can affect the mentality of the American people if they just continue to kill innocent folks. And they have no disregard [regard] * for human life. And it’s really important we succeed there as well as in Iraq. We do not want the enemy to have safe haven. Of course—unless, of course, your attitude is, this isn’t a war. So then if that’s the case, it wouldn’t matter whether we succeed or not.

But it is a two-front war. And I say there’s other fronts, but there’s other fronts where we’re taking covert actions, for example.

Go ahead.

Troop Levels in Afghanistan/War on Terror

Q. Should Americans expect a troop surge in Afghanistan?

The President. We are surging troops in Afghanistan this way and committed—

Q. Even more?

The President. Well, we’ll analyze the situation, of course, make a determination based upon the conditions on the ground. But we did surge troops. We surged troops; France surged troops. I said in Bucharest, we’ll add more troops. And then, of course, we got to make sure the strategy works—you know, have a counterinsurgency strategy that not only provides security but also provides economic follow-up after the security has been enhanced.

The question really facing the country is, will we have the patience and the determination to succeed in these very difficult theaters? And I understand exhaustion, and I understand people getting tired. And—but I would hope that whoever follows me understands that we’re at war, and now is not the time to give up in the struggle against this enemy. And that while there hasn’t been an attack on the homeland, that’s not to say people don’t want to attack us. And safe havens become very dangerous for the American people. And we’ve got to deny safe haven and, at the same time, win the struggle by advancing democracy.

This is an ideological struggle we’re involved in. These people kill for a reason. They want us to leave. They want us to, you

* White House correction.

know, not push back. They don't want democracy to succeed. And yet, if given a chance, democracy will succeed. And so these two theaters are the big challenge of the time, and the war itself is the challenge.

Yes, Roger [Roger Runningen, Bloomberg News].

National Economy/Legislative Agenda

Q. Thank you, sir. I want to follow up on Matt's question about a second economic stimulus—

The President. On whose question?

Q. Matt's question about a second economic stimulus package.

The President. Brilliant question, Matt. Now they're going to start quoting you, you know. Congratulations. [Laughter]

Q. Maybe I missed it, but did you rule out one or—

The President. I said we ought to see how this one—first one works. Let it run its course.

Q. Is it too late to consider a second one in your administration?

The President. You know, we—we're always open-minded to things, but I—let's see how this stimulus package works, and let us deal with the housing market with good piece of housing legislation and the energy issue with good energy legislation and the trade issue with good trade legislation.

People say, "Aww, man, you're running out of time; nothing is going to happen." I'll remind people what did happen: We got a good troop funding bill with no strings; got a GI bill; we got FISA. What can we get done? We can get good housing legislation done. We can get good energy legislation done. We can get trade bills done. I mean, there's plenty of time to get action with the United States Congress, and they need to move quickly. We can get judges approved.

And so I'm—we'll see what happens up there. I'm confident that if they put their mind to it, we can get good legislation.

Let's see here—yes, Mark [Mark Smith, Associated Press].

Price of Gasoline/Energy Consumption

Q. Mr. President, understanding what you say about energy supplies being tight and the debate over energy, which has gone on for

years and will continue long through the campaign and into the next administration, one thing nobody debates is that if Americans use less energy—

The President. Correct.

Q. —the supply/demand equation would improve. Why have you not sort of called on Americans to drive less and to turn down the thermostat?

The President. They're smart enough to figure out whether they're going to drive less or not. I mean, you know, it's interesting what the price of gasoline has done—is it caused people to drive less. That's why they want smaller cars, they want to conserve. But the consumer is plenty bright, Mark. The marketplace works.

Secondly, we have worked with Congress to change CAFE standards and had a mandatory alternative fuel requirement.

So, no question about it, what you just said is right. One way to correct the imbalance is to save, is to conserve. And as you noticed in my statement yesterday, I talked about good conservation. And people can figure out whether they need to drive more or less; they can balance their own checkbooks.

Q. But you don't see the need to ask—you don't think—see the value in your calling for a campaign—

The President. I think people ought to conserve and be wise about how they use gasoline and energy. Absolutely. And there's some easy steps people can take. You know, if they're not in their home, they don't keep their air-conditioning running. There's a lot of things people can do.

But my point to you, Mark, is that, you know, it's a little presumptuous on my part to dictate to consumers how they live their lives. The American people are plenty capable and plenty smart people, and they'll make adjustments to their own pocketbooks. That's why I was so much in favor of letting them keep more of their own money. It's a philosophical difference: Should the Government spend their money, or should they spend their own money? And I've got faith in the American people.

And as much as I regret that the gasoline prices are high—and they are—I also understand that people are going to make adjustments to meet their own needs. And I suspect you'll see, in the whole, Americans using less gasoline. I bet that's going to happen. And in the meantime, technologies will be coming on the market that will enable them to drive and save money, compared to the automobiles they're using before. And as you notice, the automobile industry is beginning to adjust here at home as consumer demand changes. And the great thing about our system, it is the consumer that drives our system; it's the individual American and their collection that end up driving the economy.

Yes, Ann [Ann Compton, ABC News].

Iraq

Q. Could I follow up on a couple of points, please?

The President. Okay.

Q. You never mention oil companies. Are you confident that American oil producers are tapping all of the sources they have out there, including offshore? And on Iraq, will you sign an interim agreement with Prime Minister Maliki on American operations in Iraq, leaving it to your successor to do a more permanent agreement?

The President. There are—let me start with Iraq. We're in the process of working on a strategic framework agreement with the Iraqi Government that will talk about cooperation on a variety of fronts—diplomacy, economics, justice. Part of that agreement is a security agreement, and I believe that, you know, they want to have an aspirational goal as to how quickly the transition to what we have called overwatch takes place. Overwatch will mean that the U.S. will be in a training mission, logistical support as well as special ops.

In order for our troops to be in a foreign country, there must be an understanding with the Government. There must be authorities to operate as well as protections for our troops. We're in the process of negotiating that as well. And it needs to be done prior to the year because—unless, of course, the U.N. mandate is extended. And so there are two aspects to the agreement—people

seem to conflate the two—and we're working both of them simultaneously.

Let's see here.

Oil Supply

Q. American oil producers?

The President. Oh, what was the question again on that?

Q. Well, you talked about offshore—

The President. What about them? Do I think they're investing capital to find more reserves with the price at \$140 a barrel? Absolutely. Take an offshore exploration company—first of all, it costs a lot of money to buy the lease, so they tie up capital. Secondly, it takes a lot of money to do the geophysics, to determine what the structure may or may not look like. That ties up capital. Then they put the rig out there. Now, first of all, in a Federal offshore lease, if you're not exploring within a set period of time, you lose your bonus; you lose the amount of money that you paid to get the lease in the first place.

And once you explore—your first exploratory, if you happen to find oil or gas, it is—you'll find yourself in a position where a lot of capital is tied up. And it becomes in your interest, your economic interest, to continue to explore so as to reduce the capital costs of the project on a per-barrel basis. And so I think they're exploring. And hopefully a lot of people continue to explore so that the supply of oil worldwide increases relative to demand.

Now, people say, "What about the speculators?" I think you can't help but notice there is some volatility in price in the marketplace, which obviously there are some people in the—buying and selling on a daily basis. On the other hand, the fundamentals are what's really driving the long-term price of oil, and that is: Demand for oil has increased, and supply has not kept up with it. And so part of our strategy in our country has got to be to say, okay, here are some suspected reserves, and that we ought to go after them in an environmentally friendly way.

A buddy of mine said, "Well, what about the reefs?" So I'm concerned about the reefs. I'm a fisherman; I like to fish. Reefs are important for fisheries. But the technology is such that you can protect the reefs. You don't

have to drill on top of a reef. You can drill away from a reef and then have a horizontal hole to help you explore a reservoir.

It's like in Alaska, you know. In the old days, you would have had to have—if you ever go out to west Texas, you'll see—there's like a rig every 20 acres, depending upon the formation. In Alaska, you can have one pad with a lot of horizontal drilling, which enables you to exploit the resources in a way that doesn't damage the environment. These are new technologies that have come to be, and yet we've got an old energy policy that hasn't recognized how the industry has changed. And now is the time to get people to recognize how the industry has changed.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks].

Sudan

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Yes.

Q. Two questions; one on energy and another on Sudan.

The President. On what?

Q. Not energy, I'm sorry, the economy. When, in your guesstimation, will this country see a turnaround as relates to the softening economy? When will it become strong again?

And also, on the Sudan, the Sudanese Government is looking to the United Nations for help in this situation with the ICC. And this is a body that they have ignored before. What are your thoughts about what's happening with the Sudan?

The President. Well, we're not a member of the ICC, so we'll see how that plays out.

My thought on Sudan is, is that the United Nations needs to work with this current Government to get those troops in to help save lives—AU hybrid force. I talked to Williamson, who's the Special Envoy to Sudan, yesterday. There's two aspects to the Sudanese issue. One is the north-south agreement, and he was talking about the need to make sure that there is a clear understanding about how oil revenues will be shared between north and south in a certain part of the border region there, so as to make sure that there is—that this agreement that Ambassador Danforth negotiated stays intact and stands full.

And the other aspect, obviously, is Darfur. And that's a very, very complex issue. We're trying to make—we're trying to work with the rebel groups so that they speak more with one voice. We're trying to work with Bashir to make sure he understands that there will be continued sanctions if he doesn't move forward. We're trying to help get this—AU troops in Africa—throughout Africa into Sudan. And we're working with the French on the issue of Chad.

And it's a complex situation, and sadly enough, innocent people are being displaced and are losing their life. And it's very difficult and unacceptable. And as you know, I made the decision not to unilaterally send troops. Once that decision was made, then we had to reply upon the United Nations. And I brought this issue up at the G-8 with our partners there. There's the same sense of consternation and the same sense of frustration that things haven't moved quicker. I talked to Ban Ki-moon about the issue, and he told me—I think he told me that by the end of this year, a full complement of AU troops will be there. Then the question is, will the Government help expedite the delivery of humanitarian aid?

Anyway, the other question?

National Economy/Legislative Agenda

Q. Yes, the other question——

The President. When will the economy turn around?

Q. Yes.

The President. I'm not an economist, but I do believe that we're growing. And I can remember this press conference here where people yelling "recession this, recession that"—as if you're economists. And I'm an optimist. I believe there's a lot of positive things for our economy. But I will tell you, it's not growing the way it should, and I'm sorry people are paying as high gasoline prices as they are. And all I know is, good policy will help expedite a—will strengthen our economy.

Q. Do you think it will change before you leave office?

The President. I certainly hope it changes tomorrow. But it's—I'm also realistic to know

things don't change on a dime. But nevertheless, the economy is growing. There's obviously financial uncertainty. We've talked about the decisions on the GSEs here. People need to know that if they've got a deposit in a commercial bank, the Government will make good up to \$100,000 worth of their deposit. There's no question, it's a time of uncertainty. There's a lot of events taking place at the same time. But we can pass some good law to help expedite the recovery.

One such law is a good housing—piece of housing legislation. The Congress needs to get moving on it. Another such law is to send a signal that we're willing to explore for oil here at home. I fully understand that this is a transition period away from hydrocarbons, but we ought to be wise about how we use our own resources. I think it would be a powerful signal if we announce that we're going to really get after it when it comes to oil shale. There's enormous reserves in the western States. And I think if the world saw that we're willing to put a focused, concerted effort on using new technologies to bring those reserves to bear, which would then relieve some pressure on gasoline prices, it would have an impact.

The other thing is, is that—I'm sure you know this, April, but we haven't built a refinery—a new refinery in the United States since the early seventies. It makes no sense. And yet you try to get one permitted, it is unbelievably difficult to do. People aren't willing to risk capital if they're deeply concerned about how their capital is going to be tied up in lawsuits or regulations. And we import a lot of gasoline, refined product from overseas.

So there's some things we can do to send signals that it's important that we can get the economy—take advantage of the positive aspects and get it moving stronger again.

The other thing is trade. It is—I don't understand the decision on the Colombia free trade market—free trade agreement. The Congress has given preferential treatment to goods coming out of Colombia through the Andean Trade Preference Act. In other words, Colombia businesses can sell into our country relatively duty free. And yet we don't have the same—we don't get the same treat-

ment. Now, why does that make sense? It doesn't.

You know, trade—our trade or exports have helped keep the economy growing, April, as paltry as it may be. Doesn't it make sense for us to continue to open up further opportunities to sell goods? I think it does. I do not understand why it's okay for Colombia to be able to sell into our country close to duty free, and we don't have the same advantage. And secondly, turning our back on somebody like Uribe makes no sense at all. He is a courageous fighter against terrorists. And yet our Congress won't even bring up a free trade agreement with Colombia.

Anyway, it's—politics is just choking good sense. And the other thing is, is that once we get moving on Colombia, we need to get moving on Panama and South Korea. It's in our country's interest we do that.

Olivier. Olivier [Olivier Knox, Agence France-Presse].

Afghanistan/Pakistan

Q. Yes, sir. A follow up on——

Press Secretary Dana Perino. They look alike—[laughter].

Q. Following up on Bret Baier's question——

Ms. Perino. ——Olivier. [Laughter]

The President. I know who Olivier is. I was just winking at Myers, you know. [Laughter]

Ms. Perino. Oh, I see.

The President. Yes, Olivier.

Q. Thank you, sir. Following up on Bret Baier's question——

The President. What was the question, Olivier? I'm 62, I'm having trouble remembering a lot of things.

Q. It was about Afghanistan, sir.

The President. Good, yes.

Q. Okay. Afghan President——

The President. I remember it now.

Q. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has blamed Pakistan's intelligence services for a recent terrorist attack on his country, and recent reporting suggests that Al Qaida has regrouped to pre-September 11th levels along the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Is President Karzai correct? And do you

think the new President—the new Government in Pakistan is willing and is able to fight the terrorists?

The President. First of all, we'll investigate his charge and we'll work with his service to get to the bottom of his allegation. No question, however, that some extremists are coming out of parts of Pakistan into Afghanistan. And that's troubling to us, it's troubling to Afghanistan, and it should be troubling to Pakistan. We share a common enemy. That would be extremists who use violence to either disrupt democracy or prevent democracy from taking hold.

Al Qaida is—they're there. We have hurt Al Qaida hard—hit them hard, and hurt them in—around the world, including in Pakistan. And we will continue to keep the pressure on Al Qaida with our Pakistan friends.

I certainly hope that the Government understands the dangers of extremists moving in their country. I think they do. As a matter of fact, we'll have an opportunity to explore that further on Monday with the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Pakistan is an ally; Pakistan is a friend. And I repeat: All three countries—United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—share a common enemy.

I remember very well the meeting I had at the White House with President Musharraf and President Karzai. And we talked about the need for cross-border cooperation to prevent dangerous elements from training and coming into Afghanistan, and then, by the way, returning home with a skill level that could be used against the Government.

And there was some hopeful progress made. Obviously, it's still a tough fight there. And we were heartened by the Provincial elections in that part of the world. We will continue to work to help the Government, on the one hand, deal with extremists; and on the other hand, have a counter—effective counterinsurgency strategy that uses aid to foster economic development. And it's a challenge. And the three of us working together can deal with the challenge a lot better than if we don't work together.

Okay, I've enjoyed it. Thank you very much for your time. Appreciate it. Yes.

Q. Come back soon.

The President. I will.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:22 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; President Hu Jintao of China; President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; Ambassador Richard S. Williamson, Special Envoy for Sudan; Ambassador John C. Danforth, former Special Envoy for Sudan; President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. Reporters referred to Republican Presidential candidate John McCain; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008”

July 15, 2008

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 6331, the “Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008.” I support the primary objective of this legislation, to forestall reductions in physician payments. Yet taking choices away from seniors to pay physicians is wrong. This bill is objectionable, and I am vetoing it because:

- It would harm beneficiaries by taking private health plan options away from them; already more than 9.6 million beneficiaries, many of whom are considered lower-income, have chosen to join a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, and it is estimated that this bill would decrease MA enrollment by about 2.3 million individuals in 2013 relative to the program's current baseline;
- It would undermine the Medicare prescription drug program, which today is effectively providing coverage to 32 million beneficiaries directly through competitive private plans or through Medicare-subsidized retirement plans; and

- It is fiscally irresponsible, and it would imperil the long-term fiscal soundness of Medicare by using short-term budget gimmicks that do not solve the problem; the result would be a steep and unrealistic payment cut for physicians—roughly 20 percent in 2010—likely leading to yet another expensive temporary fix; and the bill would also perpetuate wasteful overpayments to medical equipment suppliers.

In December 2003, when I signed the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act (MMA) into law, I said that “when seniors have the ability to make choices, health care plans within Medicare will have to compete for their business by offering higher quality service. For the seniors of America, more choices and more control will mean better health care.” This is exactly what has happened—with drug coverage and with Medicare Advantage.

Today, as a result of the changes in the MMA, 32 million seniors and Americans with disabilities have drug coverage through Medicare prescription drug plans or a Medicare-subsidized retirement plan, while some 9.6 million Medicare beneficiaries—more than 20 percent of all beneficiaries—have chosen to join a private MA plan. To protect the interests of these beneficiaries, I cannot accept the provisions of this legislation that would undermine Medicare Part D, reduce payments for MA plans, and restructure the MA program in a way that would lead to limited beneficiary access, benefits, and choices and lower-than-expected enrollment in Medicare Advantage.

Medicare beneficiaries need and benefit from having more options than just the one-size-fits-all approach of traditional Medicare fee-for-service. Medicare Advantage plan options include health maintenance organizations, preferred provider organizations, and private fee-for-service (PFFS) plans. Medicare Advantage plans are paid according to a formula established by the Congress in 2003 to ensure that seniors in all parts of the country—including rural areas—have access to private plan options.

This bill would reduce these options for beneficiaries, particularly those in hard-to-serve rural areas. In particular, H.R. 6331

would make fundamental changes to the MA PFFS program. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that H.R. 6331 would decrease MA enrollment by about 2.3 million individuals in 2013 relative to its current baseline, with the largest effects resulting from these PFFS restrictions.

While the MMA increased the availability of private plan options across the country, it is important to remember that a significant number of beneficiaries who have chosen these options earn lower incomes. The latest data show that 49 percent of beneficiaries enrolled in MA plans report income of \$20,000 or less. These beneficiaries have made a decision to maximize their Medicare and supplemental benefits through the MA program, in part because of their economic situation. Cuts to MA plan payments required by this legislation would reduce benefits to millions of seniors, including lower-income seniors, who have chosen to join these plans.

The bill would constrain market forces and undermine the success that the Medicare Prescription Drug program has achieved in providing beneficiaries with robust, high-value coverage—including comprehensive formularies and access to network pharmacies—at lower-than-expected costs. In particular, the provisions that would enable the expansion of “protected classes” of drugs would effectively end meaningful price negotiations between Medicare prescription drug plans and pharmaceutical manufacturers for drugs in those classes. If, as is likely, implementation of this provision results in an increase in the number of protected drug classes, it will lead to increased beneficiary premiums and copayments, higher drug prices, and lower drug rebates. These new requirements, together with provisions that interfere with the contractual relationships between Part D plans and pharmacies, are expected to increase Medicare spending and have a negative impact on the value and choices that beneficiaries have come to enjoy in the program.

The bill includes budget gimmicks that do not solve the payment problem for physicians, make the problem worse with an abrupt payment cut for physicians of roughly

20 percent in 2010, and add nearly \$20 billion to the Medicare Improvement Fund, which would unnecessarily increase Medicare spending and contribute to the unsustainable growth in Medicare.

In addition, H.R. 6331 would delay important reforms like the Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies competitive bidding program, under which lower payment rates went into effect on July 1, 2008. This program will produce significant savings for Medicare and beneficiaries by obtaining lower prices through competitive bidding. The legislation would leave the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund vulnerable to litigation because of the revocation of the awarded contracts. Changing policy in mid-stream is also confusing to beneficiaries who are receiving services from quality suppliers at lower prices. In order to slow the growth in Medicare spending, competition within the program should be expanded, not diminished.

For decades, we promised America's seniors we could do better, and we finally did. We should not turn the clock back to the days when our Medicare system offered outdated and inefficient benefits and imposed needless costs on its beneficiaries.

Because this bill would severely damage the Medicare program by undermining the Medicare Part D program and by reducing access, benefits, and choices for all beneficiaries, particularly the approximately 9.6 million beneficiaries in MA, I must veto this bill.

I urge the Congress to send me a bill that reduces the growth in Medicare spending, increases competition and efficiency, implements principles of value-driven health care, and appropriately offsets increases in physician spending.

George W. Bush

The White House,
July 15, 2008.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso

July 16, 2008

President Bush. Mr. President, thank you for coming. I first started my conversation with the President by complimenting him on his leadership in the United Nations and in the region. You've been a constructive force for peace and stability.

And we talked about Zimbabwe. I made my position abundantly clear that, one, we are disappointed with the veto of the U.N. Security Council resolution, for which both our nations worked in concert. Secondly, we deeply care about the plight of the citizens of Zimbabwe, and we hope there's a peaceful resolution soon. I told the President, in the meantime, our Government is looking at, you know, sanctions beyond that which would have been levied out of the U.N. Security Council.

I congratulated the President on the fact that his good nation is a recipient of a Millennium Challenge Account program. It's a program aimed to help farmers, entrepreneurs, and girls and women. It's the right thing to do, Mr. President. This grant would not have been awarded without your commitment to fighting corruption, your willingness to invest in the health and education of your people, and your adherence to marketplace principles. So I congratulate you, sir, on that.

Finally, I talked to him about issues that are dear to my heart, and that are the issues of HIV/AIDS. I congratulated his country for being effective at preventing the spread of AIDS. And we talked about malaria.

It's been my honor to have you here, sir. And I thank you for your leadership, and I thank you for your friendship. [*Inaudible*]
—go ahead.

President Compaore. First of all, the President and I seized this opportunity to meet, and the first thing I did was to show gratitude to President Bush for the engagement of the United States in favor of our country, Burkina Faso, and especially in terms of poverty reduction and economic development and all the help.

But I said to the President, other than Burkina Faso, all the continent of Africa is

very grateful to initiatives taken by the United States administration in terms of debt reduction, public aid to development, fight against HIV/AIDS, and building schools in our country.

And we talked about the situation on the whole continent, the need for democracy and stability in Africa, and the urgent need for a true rule of law in Zimbabwe. We also talked about the need for a political solution to the crisis in Darfur, which is weighing very heavily in all Africa.

And again, I congratulate President Bush, Congress, and the American people for their commitment for Africa.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Compaore spoke in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a White House Tee-Ball Game

July 16, 2008

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to this historic occasion. The commissioner and I—that would be Frank Robinson, the Hall of Fame—[*applause*—welcome you for the first all-star game here on the South Lawn of the White House.

We've got 50 players from 50 States, plus the District of Columbia, who have shown—come to show off their great baseball skills. And we're excited you're here. We welcome you; we welcome your families.

We want to thank Kenny Chesney for lending his great talent. We're proud you're here, Kenny. Thanks for coming.

I do want to welcome our baseball coaches today. We've got four fabulous coaches who've agreed to come: Ryne Sandberg, Hall of Famer—he's kind of pulling for the Cubs this year; John Smoltz of the Atlanta Braves. Our second game coaches: from the Baltimore Orioles, Kevin Millar—here he is; and finally, two-time all-star, Rick Monday. There he is. Hi, Rick. Thanks for coming.

I do want to welcome our announcers today, Mike and Mike. Yes, sir! Mike Golic and Mike Greenberg, we're proud you guys

are here. We expect them to call a good game.

I do want to say that a member of my Cabinet, Carlos Gutierrez, has joined us. Mr. Secretary, thank you for coming.

And finally, Mr. Commissioner, we are so lucky to have Shelby Shayler with us today. She will be presenting you and I with the first ball, but not quite yet. Before we do, we're going to recite the Little League oath.

Are the players ready? All right, here we go.

[*At this point, the pledge was recited.*]

Play ball!

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:37 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Kenny Chesney, who sang the national anthem; ESPN radio talk show hosts Mike Golic and Mike Greenberg; and Shelby Shayler, member, Naval Air Station Little League, Norfolk, VA.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation To Reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

July 16, 2008

I thank the Senate for the strong, bipartisan vote today to pass important, life-saving legislation reauthorizing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). I appreciate the efforts of Majority Leader Reid, Senators Biden and Lugar, and all other Senators from both sides of the aisle who came together today to ensure that America's generosity in battling HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases around the globe will continue in a manner consistent with the program's successful founding principles.

When we launched this program in 2003, about 50,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa were receiving antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS. Today, PEPFAR supports life-saving antiretroviral treatment for more than 1.7 million people around the world. PEPFAR has also supported treatment and prevention programs that have helped HIV-positive women give birth to nearly 200,000 infants who are HIV-free. PEPFAR is the

largest international health initiative in history to fight a single disease.

Traveling in Africa earlier this year, Laura and I had our most recent opportunity to witness the effectiveness of this program. We were honored to see the doctors, nurses, and caregivers of all faiths working to save the lives of their fellow citizens. And we met the patients, including many children, who understand and appreciate America's generosity.

With passage of today's bill, we are one step closer to ensuring that this excellent program continues to help those in need. I encourage the full Congress to move quickly to send me final legislation that I can sign.

Notice—Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor

July 16, 2008

On July 22, 2004, by Executive Order 13348, I declared a national emergency and ordered related measures, including the blocking of the property of certain persons connected to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701–1706). I took this action to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States constituted by the actions and policies of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons, in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources and their removal from Liberia and secreting of Liberian funds and property, which have undermined Liberia's transition to democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institutions and resources. I further noted that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on August 18, 2003, and the related cease-fire had not yet been universally implemented throughout Liberia, and that the illicit trade in round logs and timber products was linked to the proliferation of and trafficking in illegal arms, which perpetuated the Liberian conflict and fueled and exacerbated other conflicts throughout West Africa.

The actions and policies of Charles Taylor and others have left a legacy of destruction that continues to undermine Liberia's transformation and recovery. Because the actions and policies of these persons continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States, the national emergency declared on July 22, 2004, and the measures adopted on that date to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond July 22, 2008. Therefore, in accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)), I am continuing for 1 year the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13348.

This notice shall be published in the *Federal Register* and transmitted to the Congress.

George W. Bush

The White House,
July 16, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:27 a.m., July 17, 2008]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on July 18.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Former Liberian Regime of Charles Taylor

July 16, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency and related measures dealing with the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor are to continue in effect beyond July 22, 2008.

Today, Liberia continues its peaceful transition to a democratic order under the administration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The Government of Liberia has implemented reforms that have allowed for the removal of international sanctions on Liberian timber and diamonds, and Liberia is participating in the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative to ensure that its natural resources are used to benefit the people and country of Liberia, rather than to fuel conflict. Charles Taylor is standing trial in The Hague by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. However, stability in Liberia is still fragile.

The regulations implementing Executive Order 13348 clarify that the subject of this national emergency has been and remains limited to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor and specified other persons and not the country, citizens, Government, or Central Bank of Liberia.

The actions and policies of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons—in particular their unlawful depletion of Liberian resources, their trafficking in illegal arms, and their formation of irregular militia—continue to undermine Liberia's transition to democracy and the orderly development of its political, administrative, and economic institutions and resources. These actions and policies pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States, and for these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to the former Liberian regime of Charles Taylor.

George W. Bush

The White House,
July 16, 2008.

**Message to the Congress
Transmitting the Poland-United
States Social Security Agreement**
July 16, 2008

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95–216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)), I transmit here-

with the Agreement Between the United States of America and Poland on Social Security, which consists of two separate instruments: a principal agreement and an administrative arrangement. The agreement was signed in Warsaw on April 2, 2008.

The United States-Poland Agreement is similar in objective to the social security agreements already in force with Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation, and to help prevent the lost benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries. The United States-Poland Agreement contains all provisions mandated by section 233 and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4).

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the provisions of the principal agreement and the related administrative arrangement. Attached to this report is the report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, a report on the effect of the Agreement on income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program and the number of individuals affected by the Agreement. The Department of State and the Social Security Administration have recommended the Agreement and related documents to me.

I commend to the Congress the United States-Poland Social Security Agreement and related documents.

George W. Bush

The White House,
July 16, 2008.

**Remarks at the Funeral Service for
Former White House Press Secretary
Tony Snow**
July 17, 2008

Archbishop Wuerl; Father O'Connell; Mr. Vice President; members of the Cabinet and my administration; Members of Congress; distinguished guests; most importantly, the Snow family, Jill, Robbie, Kendall, Kristi, and Jim and other family members; former colleagues of Tony: Laura and I are privileged to join you today to pay our final respects to a cherished friend.

Tony Snow was a man of uncommon decency and compassion. He was a devoted husband, a proud and loving father, an adoring son, a beloved colleague, and a wonderful role model and friend.

In a life that was far too brief, he amassed a rare record of accomplishment. He applied his gifted mind to many fields: as a columnist, newspaper editor, TV anchor, radio host, and musician. He had the sometimes challenging distinction of working for two Presidents named Bush. As a speechwriter in my dad's administration, Tony tried to translate the President's policies into English. *[Laughter]* As a spokesman in my administration, Tony tried to translate my English into English. *[Laughter]*

Tony always gave me good and candid advice. He was a man of profound substance who loved ideas, held strong beliefs, and reveled in defending them. He took very seriously his duty to inform the public about what its Government was doing during historic times for our Nation.

In the White House briefing room, Tony worked to build a relationship of candor and trust with the press corps. On his first day at the podium, he told the gathered reporters this: "One of the reasons I took this job is not only because I believe in the President, but because, believe it or not, I want to work with you." Tony was the first working journalist to serve as the White House Press Secretary for nearly 30 years. He knew the job of a reporter was rigorous. He admired the profession and always treated it with respect. And the presence of so many members of the fourth estate here today attests to the admiration and respect that he earned.

Of course, Tony's adjustment from commentator to spokesman was not seamless. Ann Compton of ABC recently recalled that when you asked Tony a question, he would sometimes get going, and she would have to stop him, and say: "Tony, wait, I asked what the President thought." *[Laughter]*

Tony brought a fierce and challenging intellect to his duties, and he displayed an engaging wit. When a reporter asked a rather labored question about Congress, Tony did not answer it. The persistent reporter pressed him: "Are you going to just evade that question?" With a smile, Tony quipped: "No, I'm going to laugh at it." *[Laughter]*

I believe the reason Tony was so good at his job is that he looked at the world in a joyful way. He was a proud patriot who believed in America's goodness and an optimist who knew America's possibilities. He believed strongly in the wisdom of the American people. And throughout his career, he took a special pride in being a vigorous and unapologetic defender of our men and women in uniform. He supported their missions, saw honor in their achievements, and found every possible opportunity to highlight their character and courage.

Tony Snow, the professional, is a hard act to follow. Tony Snow, the man, is simply irreplaceable. Everyone who worked with him quickly grew to love him. We will always remember his wry sense of humor and abundant goodness. We'll also remember he was just a lot of fun. After all, he played six different musical instruments and was a proud member of a band called Beats Working. He may be one of the few people in history to have jammed on the South Lawn of the White House and with Jethro Tull. *[Laughter]*

We remember Tony's thoughtfulness. No matter how busy he was, this was a man who put others first. He would go out of his way to ask about people's families. He would check in with friends whenever he heard they were ill. He'd reach out to others, sometimes strangers, who were struggling with cancer. Even when he was going through difficult chemotherapy sessions, he sent inspirational e-mails to a friend whose son was suffering from a serious illness.

We remember Tony's resilient spirit. When he received a second diagnosis of cancer, he did not turn to despair. He saw it as another challenge to tackle. He found comfort in the prayers he received from millions of Americans. As he told the graduates here at Catholic University last year: "Never underestimate the power of other people's love and prayer. They have incredible power. It's as if I've been carried on the shoulders of an entire army, and they made me weightless."

Most of all, we remember Tony's love of his family. There was no doubt for Tony Snow that his family was first. When Jill reached a milestone birthday, Tony had a huge celebration. He later said that he and Jill danced that night as if they were teenagers. He said he was the most fortunate man in the world to have shared love like that. So today, Jill, our hearts are with you. And we thank you for giving Tony such a special life.

For Robbie, Kendall, and Kristi, you are in our thoughts and prayers as well. We thank you for sharing your dad with us. He talked about you all the time. He wanted nothing more than your happiness and success. You know, I used to call Tony on the weekends to get his advice. And invariably, I found him with you on the soccer field or at a swim meet or helping with your homework. He loved you a lot. Today I hope you know that we loved him a lot too.

I know it's hard to make sense of today. It is impossible to fully comprehend why such a good and vital man was taken from us so soon. But these are the great mysteries of life, and Tony knew as well as anyone that they're not ours to unveil.

The day Tony was born was also the day that many of his fellow Catholics pay tribute to Saint Justin. Justin was also a gifted thinker and writer and a powerful witness for the Christian faith. Because of his beliefs, he suffered many times of trial, and in the year 165 A.D., he was arrested. Before he received a sentence of death, he was asked: "If you are killed, do you suppose you will go to heaven?" Justin replied: "I do not suppose it, but I know and am fully persuaded of it."

Tony Snow knew that as well. That brought him great peace. When talking about the struggle he waged so admirably, he said that no matter how bad times may sometimes seem, "God doesn't promise tomorrow; he does promise eternity."

And so today we send this man of faith and character and joy on his final journey. Tony Snow has left the city of Washington for the city of God. May he find eternal rest in the arms of his Savior. And may the Author of all creation watch over his family and all those who loved him, admired him, and will always cherish his memory.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:16 a.m. at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. In his remarks, he referred to Donald W. Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington; Father David M. O'Connell, president, Catholic University of America; and Jim Snow, father of Tony Snow. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following an Aerial Tour of Areas Damaged by Wildfires in Redding, California

July 17, 2008

The President. It's been my honor to travel with the Governor and the Senator and Forest Service folks and the fire folks here in California to see the fires. Couple of things I'd like to reflect on, and I asked the Governor to say a couple of words.

One, I always come to make sure that the Federal Government is coordinating closely with the State government. I know Governor Schwarzenegger well enough to tell you that if we weren't, he'd let me know.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California. That's right.

The President. And I want to thank those in the—who work for the Federal Government for their hard work and willingness to respond quickly and their service to our country.

Secondly, I want to say something to the firefighters. We had the privilege of going and meeting some of these smoke jumpers. These are unusual people who are very courageous, determined, and dedicated. And I had this special sense there, when I was with

them, the esprit de corps, and we want to thank them for their courage.

I want to thank all those who are helping making the effort work here. People are working long hours, and the citizens of this part of the world really, really thank you for it.

I want to thank the Boy Scouts. We've got three scouts here who are representative of a bunch of scouts who are working on the Healthy Forest Initiative and are helping make sure these firefighters are—don't have to deal with some of these hot blazes the way they have in the past.

And finally, I'd like to just let the people out here know that we're paying attention in Washington, DC; we care about you; and that we'll respond as best as we possibly can.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4 p.m. at the Northern Operations Command Center. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Diane Feinstein of California. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Schwarzenegger.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

July 17, 2008

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114)(the “Act”), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond August 1, 2008, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Joseph R. Biden, Jr., chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Robert C. Byrd, chairman, and Thad Cochran, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House

Committee on Foreign Affairs; and David R. Obey, chairman, and Jerry Lewis, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations.

Remarks on Arrival in Houston, Texas

July 18, 2008

Congressional Candidate Pete Olson

It sure is good to be back in Houston, Texas. I am—I've come back to help Pete Olson win the congressional seat in the 22d Congressional District. I'm proud to support him. He's a Rice University graduate; he went to the University of Texas Law School; Navy fighter pilot; proud father, loyal husband, and a smart guy.

I—our country faces some big issues, one of which is to make sure we defend our homeland against coldblooded killers. I'm convinced Congressman Olson understands that. We've got to make sure we keep our taxes low. And one thing is for certain, we need to explore for more oil and gas here at home. People are worried about the high gasoline prices. One way to take the pressure off gasoline prices is to make it clear that the United States is going to be active about finding crude oil and natural gas right here in our own hemisphere, in our own country. And I'm convinced we can do so in environmentally friendly ways.

No doubt in my mind, Pete Olson will make a fine United States Congressman, and I'm proud to be here to support him.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. at Ellington Field.

Statement on the 90th Birthday of Nelson Mandela

July 18, 2008

On behalf of the people of the United States, Laura and I extend congratulations to Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela on his 90th birthday. I applaud the leadership he is providing on many vital causes in South Africa and around the world. Mr. Mandela is a great example of courage, hope, and the power of freedom.

Proclamation 8274—Captive Nations Week, 2008

July 18, 2008

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Freedom is the longing of every soul and the birthright of all mankind. During Captive Nations Week, we underscore our commitment to advancing democracy, defending liberty, and protecting human rights around the world.

It is in our Nation's interest to help those who are suffering under oppressive regimes defeat the ideologues of hate with an ideology of hope. Advancing the cause of liberty advances the cause of peace. A free society upholds justice and defends human dignity. Over the years, many have underestimated the power of freedom to overcome tyranny, but history has shown us that freedom will prevail.

In the 20th century, the evils of Soviet communism and Nazi fascism were defeated and freedom spread around the world as new democracies emerged. Today, our Nation faces new struggles with adversaries who murder the innocent and seek to subject millions to their violent, totalitarian rule. Still, we remain confident that the light of liberty will again overcome this darkness.

To bring that day about, we must support young democracies in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. In countries like Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Syria, and Zimbabwe, people continue to live under oppressive regimes, and we will work for the day when all these nations are free. By opposing these despots and helping young democracies grow, we will lay the foundation of peace and prosperity for generations to come. Throughout Captive Nations Week, we renew our pledge that as people across the world find their own paths to freedom, they will also find a friend in the United States of America.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as "Captive Nations Week."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 20 through July 26, 2008, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to reaffirm our commitment to all those seeking liberty, justice, and self-determination.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., July 22, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on July 23. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

July 12

In the morning, at Camp David, MD, the President had an intelligence briefing.

July 13

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

July 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to the home of former White House Press Secretary Tony Snow in Alexandria, VA, where they met with Tony's family and expressed their condolences for Tony's death on July 12. They then returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President met with Special Envoy to Sudan Richard S. Williamson.

The White House announced that the President will welcome President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso to the White House on July 16.

The President declared a major disaster in Michigan and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from June 6–13.

July 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President participated in a photo opportunity with the 2008 MATHCOUNTS National Competition Award recipients.

The President declared a major disaster in Vermont and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding from June 14–17.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas J. Madison to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Reid Murtaugh to be Deputy Director for State, Local, and Tribal Affairs in the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Beverly Allen, Donald H. Dyal, and Jeffrey B. Rudman to be members of the National Museum and Library Services Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Ronald R. Hall, David B. Jones, and James Lorand Matory as members of the Cultural Property Advisory Committee.

The President announced his intention to appoint the following individuals as members of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board: Edward H. Gee; Phillip D. Jenkins; Nancy Ann Starnes; and Hans A. Van Winkle.

July 16

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a social dinner in honor of Major League Baseball. Later, in the Rose Garden, they attended a performance by entertainer Kenny Chesney.

July 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Redding, CA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteers Mark Hendrick, Jake Wellman, and Alex Braden. Then, at the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region Headquarters, he participated in a briefing on wildfire damage and firefighting efforts. Later, he traveled to Napa, CA.

In the evening, at a private residence, the President attended a Republican National Committee dinner. Later, he traveled to Tucson, AZ.

The President announced his intention to nominate John A. Simon to be Representative of the United States to the African Union with the Rank and Status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

July 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at a private residence, he attended a Tim Bee for Congress and Arizona Trust reception. He then traveled to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, where he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Mary Frances Ward.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Houston, TX, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, at a private residence, the President attended an Olson for Congress and Texas Victory Committee reception. He then traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, arriving in the evening.

The President declared a major disaster in Nebraska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding on June 27.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted July 15

A. Brian Albritton,
of Florida, to be U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida for the term of 4 years, vice Paul I. Perez, resigned.

Beverly Allen,
of Georgia, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2013 (reappointment).

Benton J. Campbell,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Roslynn R. Mausekopf, resigned.

Michael G. Considine,
of Connecticut, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Connecticut for the term of 4 years, vice Kevin J. O'Connor, resigned.

Timothy G. Dugan,
of Wisconsin, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, vice Rudolph T. Randa, retiring.

Donald H. Dyal,
of Texas, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2013, vice Gail Daly, term expiring.

Thomas J. Madison,
of New York, to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, vice Richard Capka.

David Reid Murtaugh,
of Indiana, to be Deputy Director for State, Local, and Tribal Affairs, Office of National Drug Control Policy, vice Scott M. Burns.

Jeffrey B. Rudman,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the National Museum and Library Services Board for a term expiring December 6, 2013, vice Harry Robinson, Jr., term expiring.

Submitted July 17

John A. Simon,
of Maryland, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Anthony John Trenga,
of Virginia, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, vice Walter D. Kelley, Jr., resigned.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released July 13

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Corporations

Released July 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Michigan

Fact sheet: Allowing Offshore Exploration To Help Address Rising Fuel Costs

Fact sheet: PEPFAR: A Historic Commitment to Compassion

Released July 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Vermont

Released July 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on the nomination of Blake L. Gottesman to serve as Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on July 15 the President signed H.R. 430, H.R. 781, H.R. 1019, H.R. 2728, H.R. 3721, H.R. 4140, H.R. 4185, H.R. 5168, H.R. 5395, H.R. 5479, H.R. 5517, H.R. 5528, H.R. 5778, and H.R. 6040

Released July 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator R. David Paulison, and Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 634, H.R. 814, and S. 2967

Released July 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Scott M. Stanzel

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's video teleconference with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Nebraska

**Acts Approved
By the President**

Approved July 15

H.R. 430 / Public Law 110-262

To designate the United States bankruptcy courthouse located at 271 Cadman Plaza East in Brooklyn, New York, as the "Conrad B. Duberstein United States Bankruptcy Courthouse"

H.R. 781 / Public Law 110-263

To redesignate Lock and Dam No. 5 of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System near Redfield, Arkansas, authorized by the Rivers and Harbors Act approved July 24, 1946, as the "Colonel Charles D. Maynard Lock and Dam"

H.R. 2728 / Public Law 110-264

To designate the station of the United States Border Patrol located at 25762 Madison Avenue in Murrieta, California, as the "Theodore L. Newton, Jr. and George F. Azrak Border Patrol Station"

H.R. 3721 / Public Law 110-265

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1190 Lorena Road in Lorena, Texas, as the "Marine Gunnery Sgt. John D. Fry Post Office Building"

H.R. 4140 / Public Law 110-266

To designate the Port Angeles Federal Building in Port Angeles, Washington, as the "Richard B. Anderson Federal Building"

H.R. 4185 / Public Law 110-267

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 11151 Valley Boulevard in El Monte, California, as the "Marisol Heredia Post Office Building"

H.R. 5168 / Public Law 110-268

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 19101 Cortez Boulevard in Brooksville, Florida, as the "Cody Grater Post Office Building"

H.R. 5395 / Public Law 110-269

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 11001 Dunklin Drive in St. Louis, Missouri, as the "William 'Bill' Clay Post Office Building"

H.R. 5479 / Public Law 110-270

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 117 North Kidd Street in Ionia, Michigan, as the "Alonzo Woodruff Post Office Building"

H.R. 5517 / Public Law 110-271

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 7231 FM 1960 in Humble, Texas, as the "Texas Military Veterans Post Office"

H.R. 5528 / Public Law 110–272

To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 120 Commercial Street in Brockton, Massachusetts, as the “Rocky Marciano Post Office Building”

H.R. 5778 / Public Law 110–273

District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority Independence Preservation Act

H.R. 6040 / Public Law 110–274

To amend the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 to clarify the authority of the Secretary of the Army to provide reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by members of the Committee on Levee Safety

Passed July 15, over the President’s veto

H.R. 6331 / Public Law 110–275

Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008

Approved July 15

H.R. 1019 / Public Law 110–276

To designate the United States customhouse building located at 31 Gonzalez Clemente Avenue in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, as the “Rafael Martinez Nadal United States Customhouse Building”

Approved July 17

H.R. 634 / Public Law 110–277

American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin Act

H.R. 814 / Public Law 110–278

Children’s Gasoline Burn Prevention Act

S. 2967 / Public Law 110–279

To provide for certain Federal employee benefits to be continued for certain employees of the Senate Restaurants after operations of the Senate Restaurants are contracted to be performed by a private business concern, and for other purposes